

**REMARKS**

Claims 2-10 and 12-21 are pending in the application, with independent claims 2, 3 and 12 being amended herein, and claim 11 cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter cited therein.

The Office Action issued February 19, 2004 has been reviewed and its contents carefully considered. Claims 3, 4 and 10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Cooper in view of McDuffie and Gizowski. Claims 2-9, 10, 11, 12 and 16-21 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Humbert in view of McDuffie and Gizowski. Without conceding the propriety of the rejections, each of the independent claims in this application (claims 2, 3 and 12) have been amended to more particular recite the applicant's invention. Accordingly these rejections are traversed at least for the following reasons.

Claims 2, 3 and 12 as amended each recite a filter having an inlet end and an outlet end. The filter media assembly abuts the outlet end, and a valve body is located proximate to the inlet end. The inlet outlet, filter media and valve body are all coaxial. Further, each of claims 2, 3 and 12 recites *a stabilizing spring* (or stabilizing and biasing means) that is (i) *coaxial with the valve assembly* (ii) *disposed proximate the inlet end* and (iii) *located between, and in contact with, the first retainer* (or forward flow bypass means) and *the inlet end*.

Further, the stabilizing spring or stabilizing and biasing means urges or biases the filter media assembly against the outlet end to stabilize the filter media assembly and the valve body inside the filter housing.

As seen in the exemplary embodiment depicted in FIG. 3 of the present application, this provides a compact arrangement whereby the stabilizing spring located at the inlet end fits directly between the inlet end of the housing and first retainer of the first valve. This provides a stabilizing and biasing force so that the end of the filter assembly located near the filter outlet can abut directly against the inside of the housing at the outlet end.

Such an arrangement is neither taught nor suggested by the primary citations. The Office Action refers to a spring 30 in Humbert with respect to now cancelled claim 11. However, the spring 30 of Humbert is not located at an inlet end of the filter as recited in claims 2, 3 and 12. To the contrary, the spring of Humbert is located in an end opposite to the single end of the filter which has both the inlets and the outlets. Thus, Humbert is distinct in several respects, including for example (i) that its *inlets and outlets are at the same end*, (ii) that its *spring 30 is not located on an inlet end*, and (iii) that *its inlet outlet and valve and spring 30 are not substantially coaxial*.

Neither McDuffie nor Gizowski remedy the deficiencies of the primary reference discussed above. For example, McDuffie does not teach or suggest biasing a filter assembly against an outlet end of the housing using a stabilizing spring arranged at an inlet end of the housing that is opposed from the outlet end. Gizowski also fails to remedy this deficiency.

In view of the foregoing, reconsideration and allowance of this application are believed in order, and such action is earnestly solicited.

The Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned attorney at (202) 861-1696 in an effort to resolve any matters still outstanding before issuing another action. In the event this paper is not timely filed, or an extension is required, applicant petitions for an appropriate extension of time and requests the charge of any fee deficiencies or credit of any overpayment to deposit account number 50-2036.

Respectfully submitted,

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